

**FROM:** David Helms. Montgomery County Pedestrian and Bicycle Advocate  
**TO:** Montgomery County Council  
**SUBJECT:** Request County Council invest MORE resources in our trails and make our streets safe for everyone in FY22 CIP Budget

Dear Council President Hucker and Councilmembers,

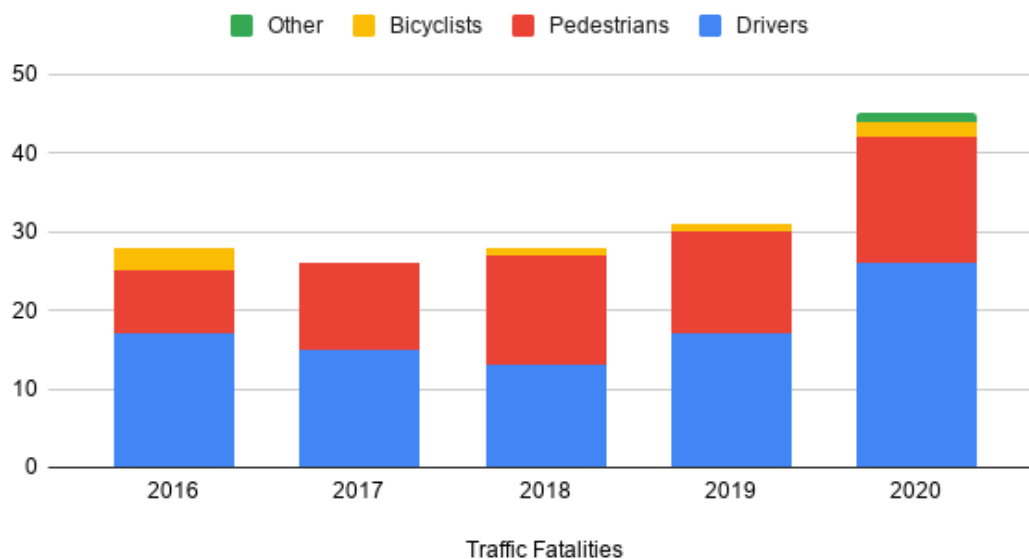
Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Your diligence and hard work on behalf of our county is greatly appreciated.

Very Respectfully,  
Dave Helms  
Silver Spring, Maryland

**Key Issues:**

**A. Montgomery County Fatalities since Vision Zero was enacted by the County Council in 2016:**

**Montgomery County Traffic Fatalities (2016-2020)**



In 2020, there were 45 traffic fatalities including 16 pedestrians, 2 bicyclists, and 1 skateboarder, the most since 2008, a 30% LESS miles driven, but drivers took advantage of the lower congestion and drove FAST. As we all know, speed kills. The 19 pedestrian, bicyclist and skateboarder fatalities is the most since 2008, 7 more fatalities than average.

**B. Montgomery County trail usage was up, WAY UP, in 2020:**

		March 1, 2020- Dec 30, 2020			March 1,2019-Dec 30, 2019			
Counter Location	County	Bike	Peds	Total	Bike	Peds	Total	% Increase Year over Year
Capital Crescent Trail	Montgomery County	415,848	141,196	557,044	411,577	101,518	513,095	9%

**Bottom Line:** Please support Bicycle, Pedestrian, Priority Area (BPPA) funding, Parks... especially for trails that connect communities to public green spaces... especially in Equity Emphasis Areas and near Vision Zero designated High Injury Network corridors.

Support large projects like the CCT Tunnel, support the small projects including MCDOT Safe Streets to Schools. ***The message is clear, we need to invest MORE resources in our trails and make our streets safe for everyone.***

## **Specific Recommendations:**

**1. Restore CIP funding for the CCT Tunnel:** I request your support for CIP restoring funding for the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) Tunnel under State Highway MD355 (Wisconsin Ave). The CCT Tunnel will RESTORE safe and efficient access to Bethesda and the region for millions of pedestrians and bicyclists and be a critical transportation asset providing substantive return on the county's investment for 30-50 years.

- **Promises Made, Promises Kept!** Montgomery County made a promise to rebuild the CCT tunnel given up for Purple Line in 2017
- **The tunnel is critical to safely and efficiently linking the counties regional trail networks**
- **Bethesda is Growing Rapidly:** Failing to build the CCT Tunnel will expose Purple Line 12,000 walkers and bicyclists using the Elm(west) Metro South Entrance to over 40,000 daily vehicles traveling north-south on MD355.
- **Improves Return on Investments for Regional Transportation Investments:**
  - \$2 billion for Purple Line
  - \$110 million for Bethesda Metro South Entrance
  - \$61.8 million for CCT Trail
  - \$8 million to Carr for trail access under/through 7272 Wisconsin (the 400ft tunnel is located in the new parking garage providing access to Woodmont Ave/Bethesda Ave)... the CCT Tunnel is ½ built!
- **Best Value:** Best relative value in terms of avoidance of pedestrian, bicyclist, and driver conflicts (and crashes) per dollar compared to recent major pedestrian facility bridge and tunnel construction CIP investments.
- **Reduces traffic congestion and provides significant time savings** (5 minutes) over the surface trail detour, saving >150,000 hours commute time, supporting Bethesda TMD 55% Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS)
- **Critical to County's Economy:** Small businesses in Bethesda will lose a million potential customers from CCT Tunnel closure in 2017; businesses and vulnerable users must be whole.

## **2. Support targeted and effective automatic speed enforcement (ASE) managed by MCDOT as a critical component of safe streets strategy complementing engineering and education**

- For effective use of ASE, the County Council should consider:
  - a. Amending the transportation statute to allow ASE:
    - On roads in commercially zoned areas
    - On roads with speed limits greater than 35 mph
  - b. These changes to the statute are necessary to implement "[REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT](#)" February 4, 2021 recommendations for traffic police reform including Recommendation 8:
    - ***Move to fully automated traffic enforcement through expansion of speed and intersection camera programs***, and reduce FTE sworn officer positions across MCPD districts in proportion to the amount of officer time currently spent on in-person traffic enforcement by sworn officers
  - c. Engage with MCPD to make the automatic speed enforcement (ASE) contract more flexible to add additional cameras, as needed. MCPD has been negotiating a new contract for almost 3 years; this contract requires County Council review.
- ASE encourages drivers to comply with reasonable speed limits, reduces crashes and saves lives.
- ASE program PAYS FOR ITSELF
- Communities of color and disadvantaged communities, the poor, elderly, and youth who walk, bike, are car-free, and use transit more than other residents, suffer inordinately from traffic violence. ***Traffic violence is social injustice.***

## **3. Support Safe Streets investment, including improving street lighting in urban areas. The County should convert ALL street lights to LED at a lifecycle cost savings of 20% and reinvest savings into pedestrian lighting at intersections, mid-block crosswalks, and along key trails.**

- ***63% of all Montgomery County pedestrian fatalities occur at night.***
- There are 67,000 street lights in the county, 29,500 are county owned.
- The county pays PEPCO and BGE to maintain these street lights through a MOU.
  - PEPCO is “years behind” in converting street lights to LED
- Many of these street lights are High Pressure Sodium vapor (HPS) lights
- HPS street lights are relatively expensive and ***use about twice as much energy*** as LED street lights with similar luminance. ***This is a significant climate resilience advantage!***
- Lifecycle costs of LED street lights is 20% less expensive than HPS street lights
- Delegate Carr is an AUTHORITY, please ask him how to proceed. Consider using a different street light provider than PEPCO.